

AMALGAM



APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

IRON MA LANTERN

#1
JUNE 97



DIRECT EDITION



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DMS + ATOMIC

OUR STORY OPENS SOMEWHERE IN THE UNCHARTED VASTNESS OF DEEP SPACE, WHERE WE FIND...

I SENSED YOUR APPROACH FROM THREE PARSECS AWAY, MY HUMAN SERVANT -- AND SEE IN YOUR THOUGHTS THAT YOU HAVE BEEN VICTORIOUS!

COME FORWARD, THEN -- AND DELIVER YOUR BURDEN TO OA, THE LIVING PLANET!

-- IRON LANTERN IS NOBODY'S SERVANT!

KEEP YOUR ATMOSPHERE ON, OA -- I'M FLYING AS FAST AS I CAN! AND FOR THE UMPTENTH TIME --

YES, OUR STORY STARTS HERE -- BUT IT WON'T END HERE! IRON LANTERN'S GOT TO SKEDADDLE BACK TO EARTH, IN TIME FOR A...

SHOWDOWN AT STARK AIRCRAFT!

A KRAFTY KURT BUSIEK • PEERLESS PAUL SMITH PRODUCTION!

INKED BY: AL WILLIAMSON & PEPOY/ADAMS/MCLEOD PALMER/MILGROM/SMITH

CHRISTIE SCHEELE & DIGITAL CHAMELEON COLORS RICHARD STARRINGS & COMICRAFT/AD LETTERS GLENN GREENBERG ASSISTANT EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR BOB HARRAS CHIEF

AND NOW THAT YOU'RE FINISHED APPLAUDING, TURN THE PAGE, QUICK! YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS A MOMENT OF THE AWESOME ACTION THAT AWAITS!

AS IRON LANTERN DESCENDS TO THE SURFACE OF OA...



HE'S GONE SILENT AGAIN... WHICH IS FINE WITH ME! I DON'T CARE MUCH FOR HIS "SERVANT" TALK --
-- BUT H.E.C.T.O.R. HERE -- THE HIGHLY EVOLVED CREATURE TOTALLY ORIENTED ON REVENGE -- IS ONE OF THE DEADLIEST BEINGS ALIVE!



-- AND NO ONE'S BETTER EQUIPPED TO KEEP HIM IMPRISONED THAN OA!
WHY, IF I HADN'T MANAGED TO FELL HIM AT THE LAST MOMENT BY REVERSING THE POLARITY OF HIS ION CANNON --
-- HE AND THE WEAPONERS OF A.I.M. WOULD BE RULING EARTH RIGHT NOW!

Uhh...

*AS SHOWN IN THE IRON LANTERN/MARINER SPECIAL! DON'T TELL US YOU MISSED IT -- WE'D BE SIMPLY HEARTBROKEN!



CURSE YOU, IRON LANTERN! YOU WON'T KEEP ME HERE FOREVER -- AND WHEN I ESCAPE AGAIN, YOU'LL BE MY FIRST TARGET!

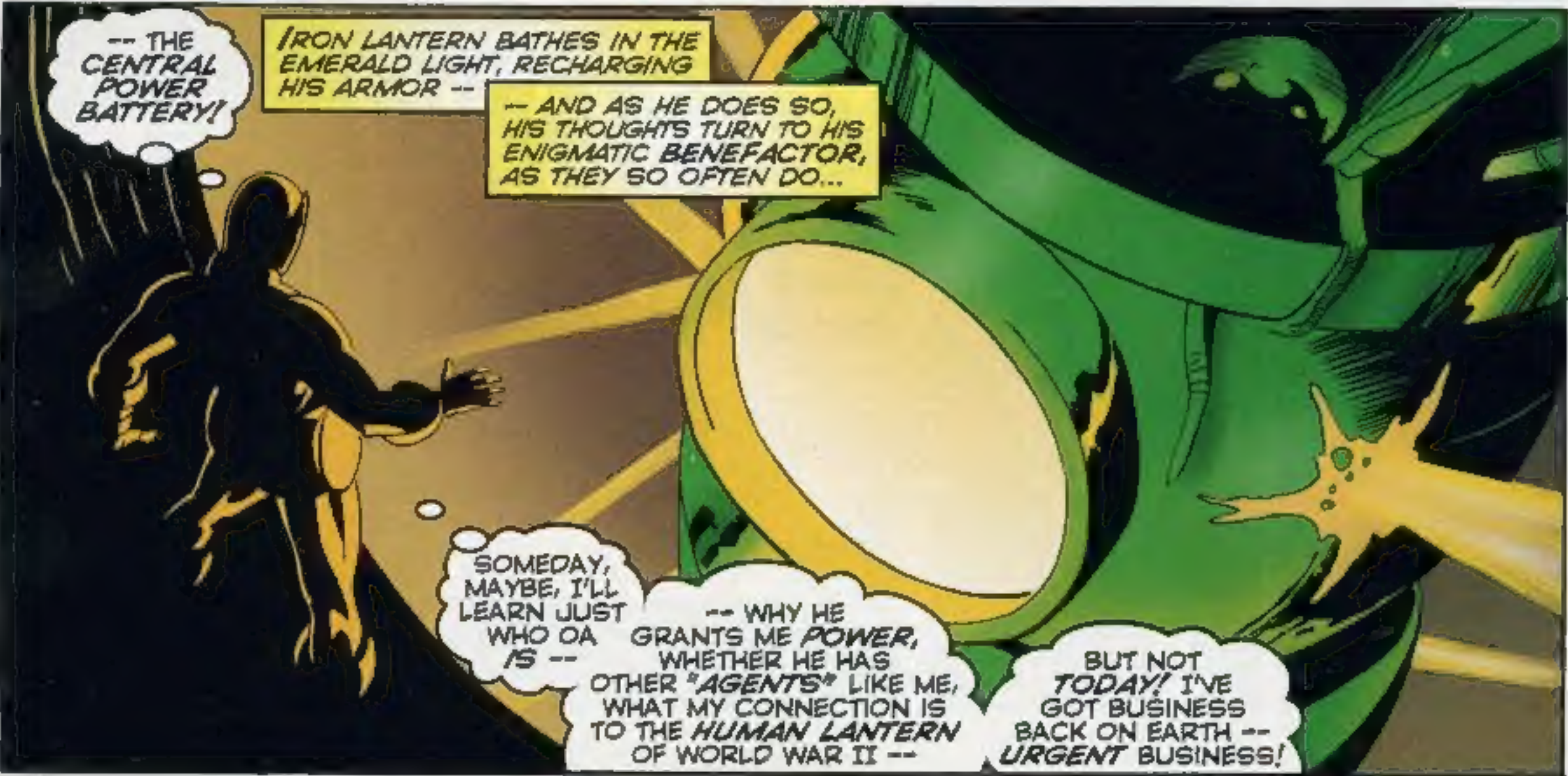
YOU KNOW THE ADDRESS, HEC -- I'LL BE WAITING! NOW PIPE DOWN --

-- WHILE OA ABSORBS YOU INTO HIS PRISON LEVELS!



AND, ONCE H.E.C.T.O.R. HAS VANISHED BENEATH THE SURFACE...

WELL, THAT'S THAT! NO NEED TO STICK AROUND, NOT ONCE I'VE TAKEN CARE OF A LITTLE BUSINESS AT --



-- THE CENTRAL POWER BATTERY!

IRON LANTERN BATHES IN THE EMERALD LIGHT, RECHARGING HIS ARMOR --

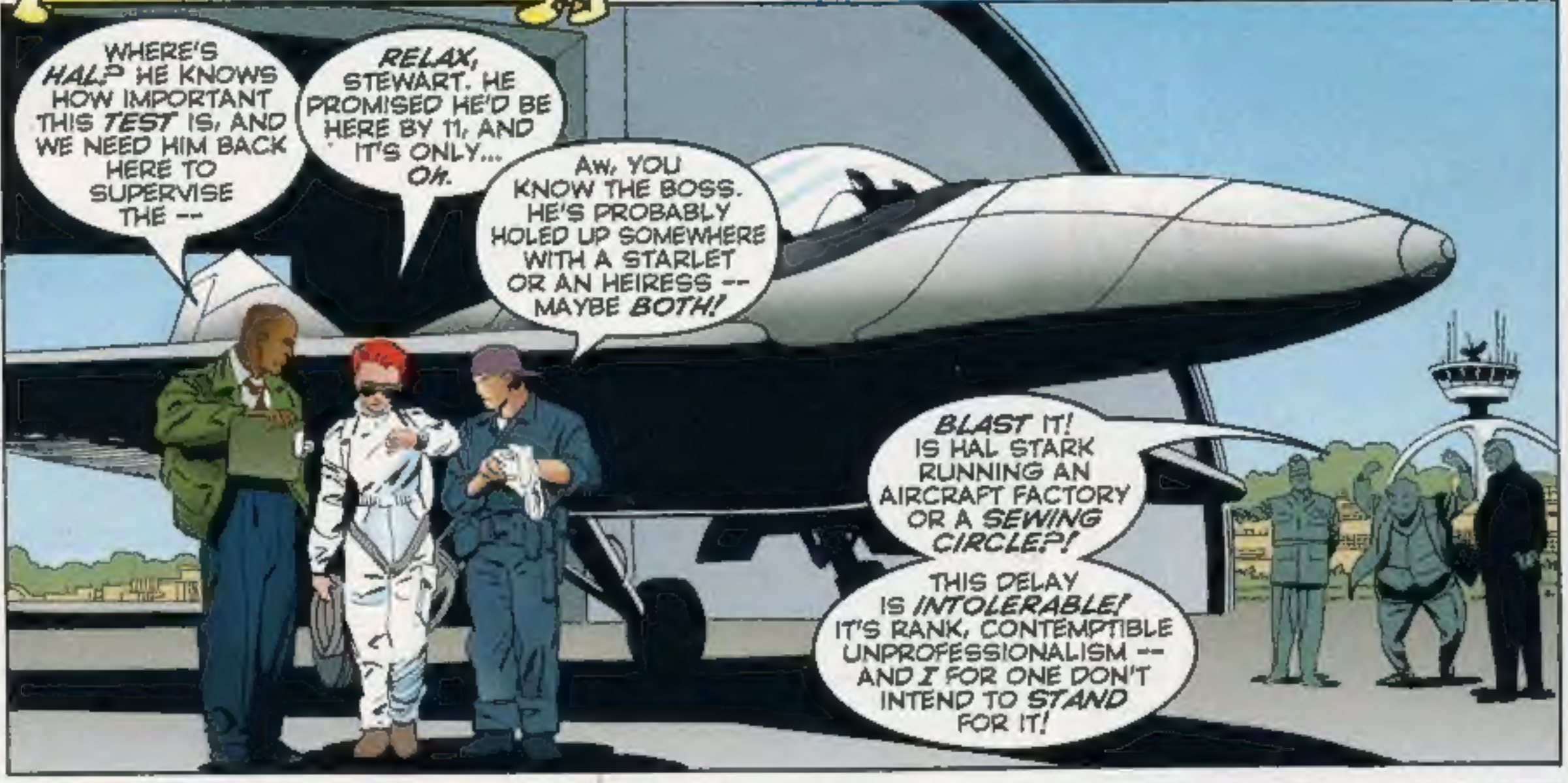
-- AND AS HE DOES SO, HIS THOUGHTS TURN TO HIS ENIGMATIC BENEFACTOR, AS THEY SO OFTEN DO...

SOMEDAY, MAYBE, I'LL LEARN JUST WHO OA IS --

-- WHY HE GRANTS ME POWER, WHETHER HE HAS OTHER "AGENTS" LIKE ME, WHAT MY CONNECTION IS TO THE HUMAN LANTERN OF WORLD WAR II --

BUT NOT TODAY! I'VE GOT BUSINESS BACK ON EARTH -- URGENT BUSINESS!

INDEED, AT THE STARK AIRCRAFT PLANT OUTSIDE COAST CITY...



WHERE'S HAL? HE KNOWS HOW IMPORTANT THIS TEST IS, AND WE NEED HIM BACK HERE TO SUPERVISE THE --

RELAX, STEWART. HE PROMISED HE'D BE HERE BY 11, AND IT'S ONLY...
Oh.

Aw, you know the boss. He's probably holed up somewhere with a starlet or an heiress -- maybe both!

BLAST IT! IS HAL STARK RUNNING AN AIRCRAFT FACTORY OR A SEWING CIRCLE?!

THIS DELAY IS INTOLERABLE! IT'S RANK, CONTEMPTIBLE UNPROFESSIONALISM -- AND I FOR ONE DON'T INTEND TO STAND FOR IT!



I HATE TO SAY IT --
-- BUT THE SENATOR'S RIGHT. HE CAME ALL THE WAY FROM WASHINGTON TO SEE THE S-41 TESTED --

-- AND THAT'S JUST WHAT HE'S GOING TO GET!



FERRIS TO TOWER. REQUESTING CLEARANCE FOR TAKE-OFF.

THAT'S AFFIRMATIVE, Ms. FERRIS. THE S-41 IS CLEARED FOR TAKE-OFF ON RUNWAY THREE. AND GOOD LUCK!



I DON'T KNOW, HAPPY. WITH HAL MISSING, AND ALL THE TROUBLE WE'VE HAD TO DEAL WITH LATELY* -- I JUST DON'T KNOW THAT THIS IS WISE...

YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THAT THE BOSS MUST BE OFF SOMEWHERE AS IRON LANTERN, RHODES. AS FOR THE REST --

-- YOUR JOB'S TO DESIGN ENGINES, AN' HERS IS TO FLY PLANES. AN' WHEN IT COMES TO HANDLING SURPRISES UP ABOVE --

*IN SHOWCASE OF SUSPENSE #90, 92, AND 96, FOR STARTERS!

"-- PEPPER FERRIS IS THE BEST THERE IS!"



AT THAT MOMENT,
HIGH ABOVE...



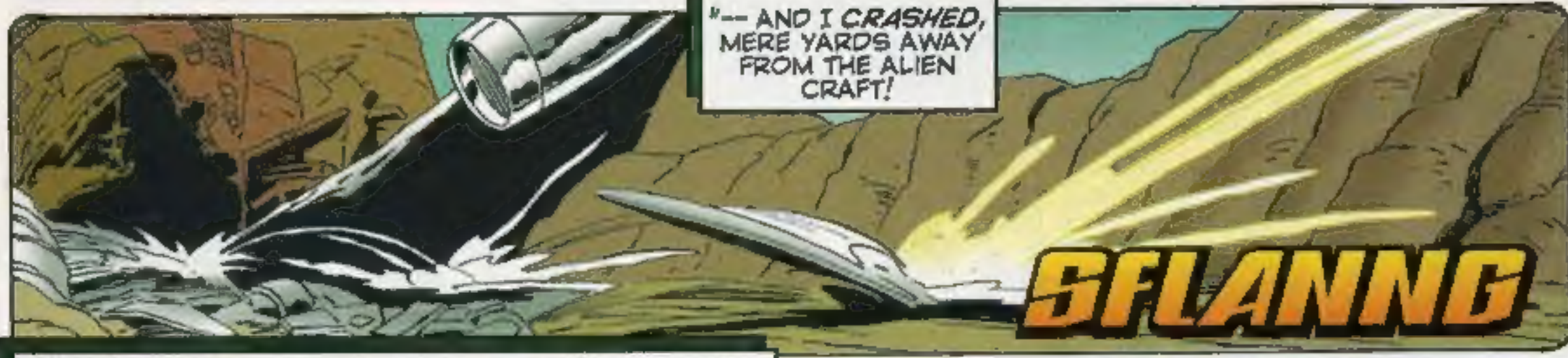
EARTH! I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET USED TO SEEING IT FROM SPACE! AND I NEVER REALLY EXPECTED I'D MAKE IT UP HERE --
-- UNTIL THAT ONE FATEFUL DAY THAT CHANGED MY LIFE FOREVER!

"I'D BEEN MAKING MODIFICATIONS TO A STATIONARY FLIGHT-SIMULATOR AT STARK AIRCRAFT -- WHEN IT SUDDENLY TOOK OFF, WITH ME IN IT!



"I WAS SWIFTLY DRAWN TOWARD WHAT LOOKED LIKE A CRASHED SPACE-CRAFT! BUT BEFORE I GOT THERE, THE ENERGY LEVITATING ME CUT OFF --

"-- AND I CRASHED, MERE YARDS AWAY FROM THE ALIEN CRAFT!



SPLANNING

"BADLY INJURED, JAGGED METAL PIERCING MY CHEST, I MANAGED TO DRAG MYSELF TO THE SHIP, WHERE I FOUND THE CORPSE OF AN ALIEN BEING--



"-- A BEING I LATER LEARNED TO BE NAMED RHOMANN SUR!

"WHATEVER THE ALIEN HAD BROUGHT ME HERE FOR, HE'D DIED BEFORE HE COULD ACCOMPLISH IT.

"BUT I MANAGED TO KEEP MYSELF ALIVE -- USED THE ALIEN TECHNOLOGY TO BUILD MYSELF A SUIT OF ARMOR THAT WOULD KEEP MY HEART BEATING --

"-- POWERED BY THE LANTERN-LIKE BATTERY I FOUND IN THE WRECKAGE.



"WEARING THE ARMOR, I MANAGED TO FIGHT OFF THE ALIENS WHO'D SHOT SUR'S SHIP DOWN -- IN THE PROCESS MAKING A PUBLIC SPLASH, AND EARNING A REPUTATION AS IRON LANTERN!



"BUT SO MUCH HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN, AND -- "





NEARBY...

--- THEY'RE NOT RESPONDING!

THIS CAN'T BE! WE WENT OVER ALL THE SYSTEMS BEFORE THE FLIGHT ---

--- AND THEY WORKED PERFECTLY! COME ON, RESPOND!

NO! THE ENGINE'S FLAMED OUT! AND THE CONTROLS ---

NO GOOD --- I'M LOSING AIRSPEED FAST! AND IN SECONDS ---



--- I'LL BE IN DEADFALL!

IT'S GOT TO BE SABOTAGE -- THERE'S NO OTHER EXPLANATION! NOT THAT THE GOOD SENATOR WILL BELIEVE THAT ---

--- AS FAR AS HE'LL BE CONCERNED, IT'LL JUST BE A BILLION-PLUS-DOLLAR AIRCRAFT DESTROYED ---

--- AND IT'LL BE MY FAULT!

STILL, I CAN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT NOW. GOT TO HIT THE EJECT BITTON AND PUNCH ---



HUHP!



IRON LANTERN! BOY. ARE YOU EVER A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES!

YOU LOOKED LIKE YOU COULD USE A HAND, PEP -- AND I'M SURE YOUR BOSS WOULD LIKE HIS PLANE BACK IN ONE PIECE!

LET'S GET YOU BACK TO SOLID GROUND -- AND BACK TO STARK AIRCRAFT!

BLAST! THIS COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED AT A WORSE TIME! SOMEONE'S GUNNING FOR US -- AND I HAVE NO IDEA WHO!

NOT EXACTLY THE BEST POSITION TO BE IN ---



"-- AT THE RECEPTION WE'RE THROWING FOR THE SENATOR THIS EVENING..."

IS THIS THE GREATEST, PEP, OR WHAT? ME COMIN' INTO A SWANKY PARTY WITH A DREAM LIKE YOU ON MY ARM, ALL EYES ON US!

GUESS YOU COULDN'T RESIST THE OL' KALMAKU CHARM FOREVER, Eh?

-- CLEARLY SABOTAGE, HAL. TROUBLE IS, WE CAN'T PROVE IT. BUT I KNOW THOSE ENGINES --

-- AND WHAT HAPPENED -- IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

I WANT A FULL REPORT, STEW, AND SOON. BUT RIGHT NOW --



"-- I SEE ANOTHER DISASTER IN THE MAKING..."

GET SOMETHING STRAIGHT, HAPPY KALMAKU! I AM NOT YOUR DATE!

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE SUCH A LOUSY MECHANIC YOU CAN'T EVEN KEEP YOUR CAR WORKING, AND I TOOK PITY ON YOU --

Aw, C'MON, PEP --

-- DON'T YOU "PEP" ME!



GOOD EVENING, PEPPER -- DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT?

I'D LOVE TO TELL HER HOW RADIANT SHE IS, HOW HER HAIR'S LIKE SOLID FIRE...



...BUT I CAN'T. NOT AS LONG AS SHE'S AN EMPLOYEE, AND I'M HER BOSS...

HAL! YOU HAVE PERFECT TIMING, AS ALWAYS!

I, Eh, WANTED TO TELL YOU WHAT A FINE JOB YOU DID TODAY --

-- THAT THERE'S NO QUESTION OF PILOT ERROR --

STARK!



OH, LORD -- HERE IT COMES...

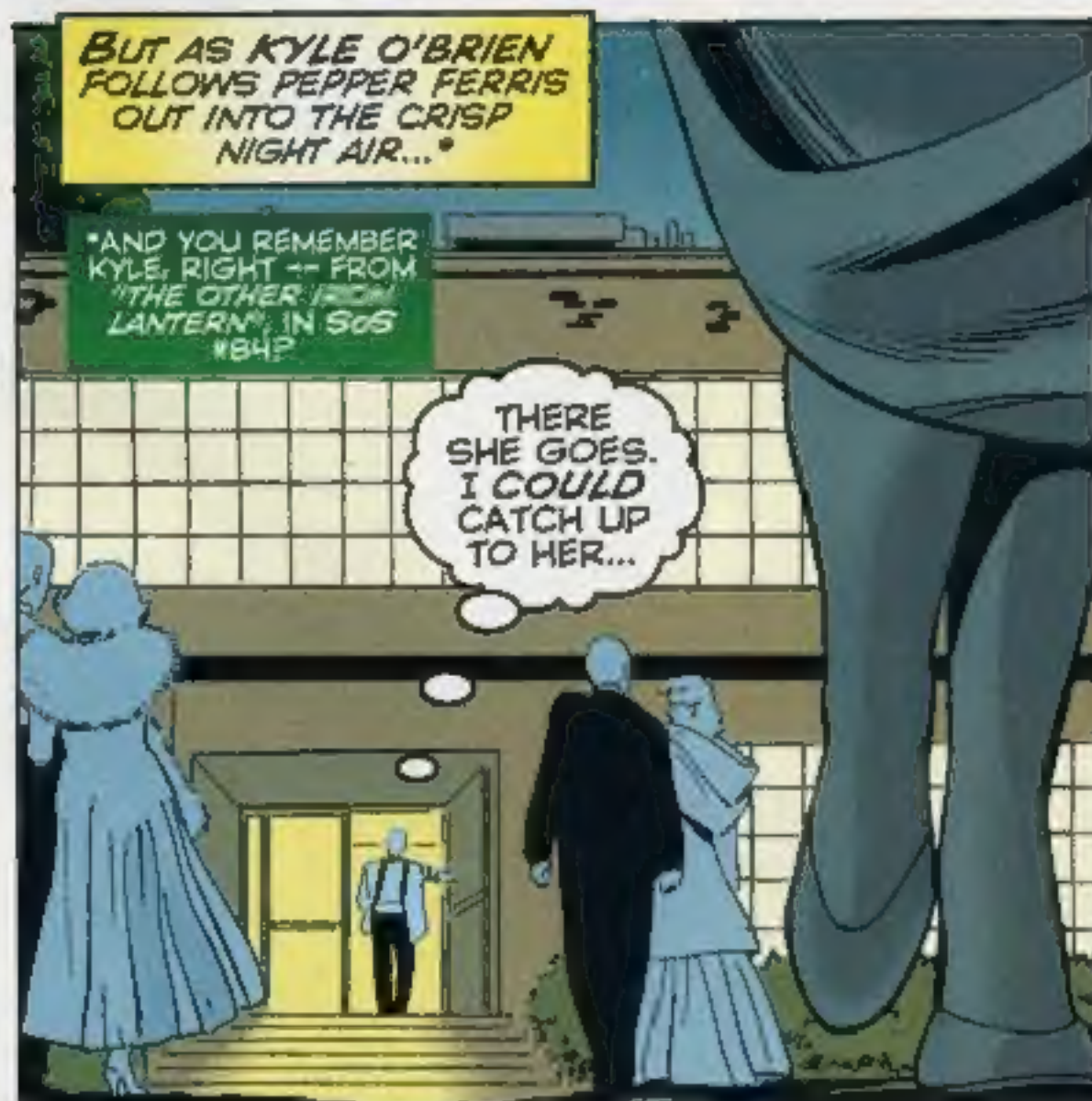
I WANT AN EXPLANATION, STARK -- AND I WANT IT NOW!

A PLEASURE AS ALWAYS, SENATOR. ENJOYING THE PARTY?



DON'T TRY TO SNOW ME, STARK -- YOU'RE ALREADY RISKING BEING CITED FOR CONTEMPT OF CONGRESS!

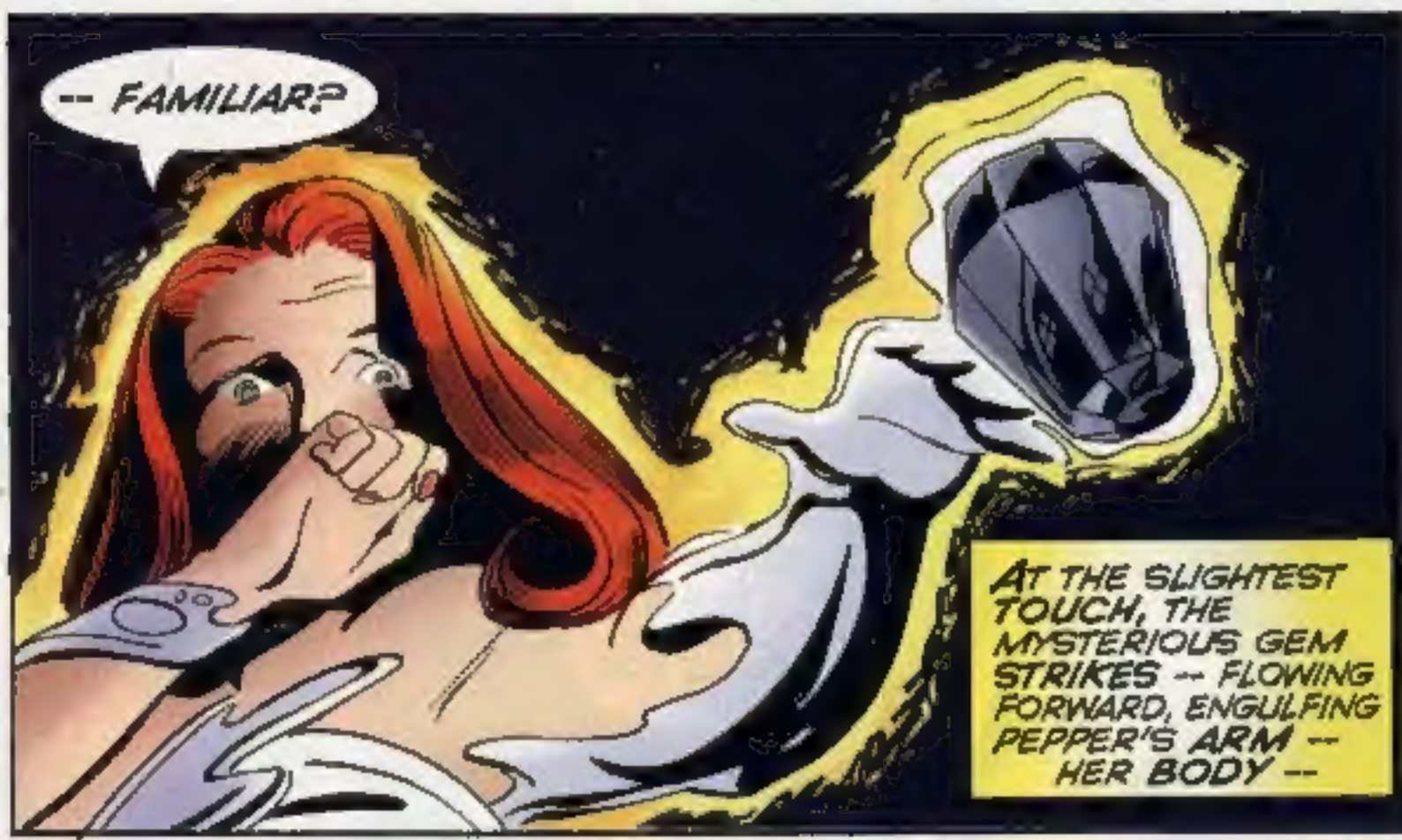
YOUR FANCY NEW PLANE'S A PIECE OF JUNK! YOUR TEST FLIGHT'S A BUST! AND YOU CAN'T EVEN BE BOTHERED TO SHOW UP FOR IT!



BUT IF KYLE HAD FOLLOWED THE LOVELY MS. FERRIS, HE MIGHT HAVE WITNESSED A MOST DRAMATIC OCCURRENCE INDEED...

OF ALL THE UNENLIGHTENED, PREHISTORIC, IDIOTIC --!

HOW CAN HE SAY -- ? HOW CAN HE EVEN THINK SUCH THINGS? IF MOM WAS STILL ALIVE SHE'D --



AT THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH, THE MYSTERIOUS GEM STRIKES -- FLOWING FORWARD, ENGULFING PEPPER'S ARM -- HER BODY --



-- HER HEAD!

AND THE YOUNG TEST PILOT COLLAPSES, FIGHTING AGAINST THE GEM-BORNE IMAGES THAT BOMBARD HER BRAIN...

Uhh... NO! GOT TO... RESIST...

BUT WHILE IT'S PEPPER FERRIS THAT FALLS...



...IT'S SOMEONE ELSE THAT RISES...

I... UNDERSTAND. I WILL DO AS YOU ASK, THEN, IN RETURN FOR YOUR AWAKENING ME...

...BUT THEN MADAME SAPPHIRE* HAS BUSINESS OF HER OWN TO ATTEND TO!

*LAST SEEN IN SoS #75!

IND NEARBY, AT A DOORWAY THAT APPEARS ON NONE OF THE STARK AIRCRAFT ARCHITECTURAL PLANS...



I ONLY HAD A BRIEF CHANCE TO WIELD THE EMERALD POWER -- WHEN I STOOD IN FOR IRON LANTERN, AS THE GREEN GUARDSMAN!
THAT WAS THE HIGH POINT OF MY LIFE -- AND I'M NOT GOING TO JUST LET IT SLIP AWAY! IF THE INFORMATION I RECEIVED WAS CORRECT --

*IN THE AFOREMENTIONED #84!



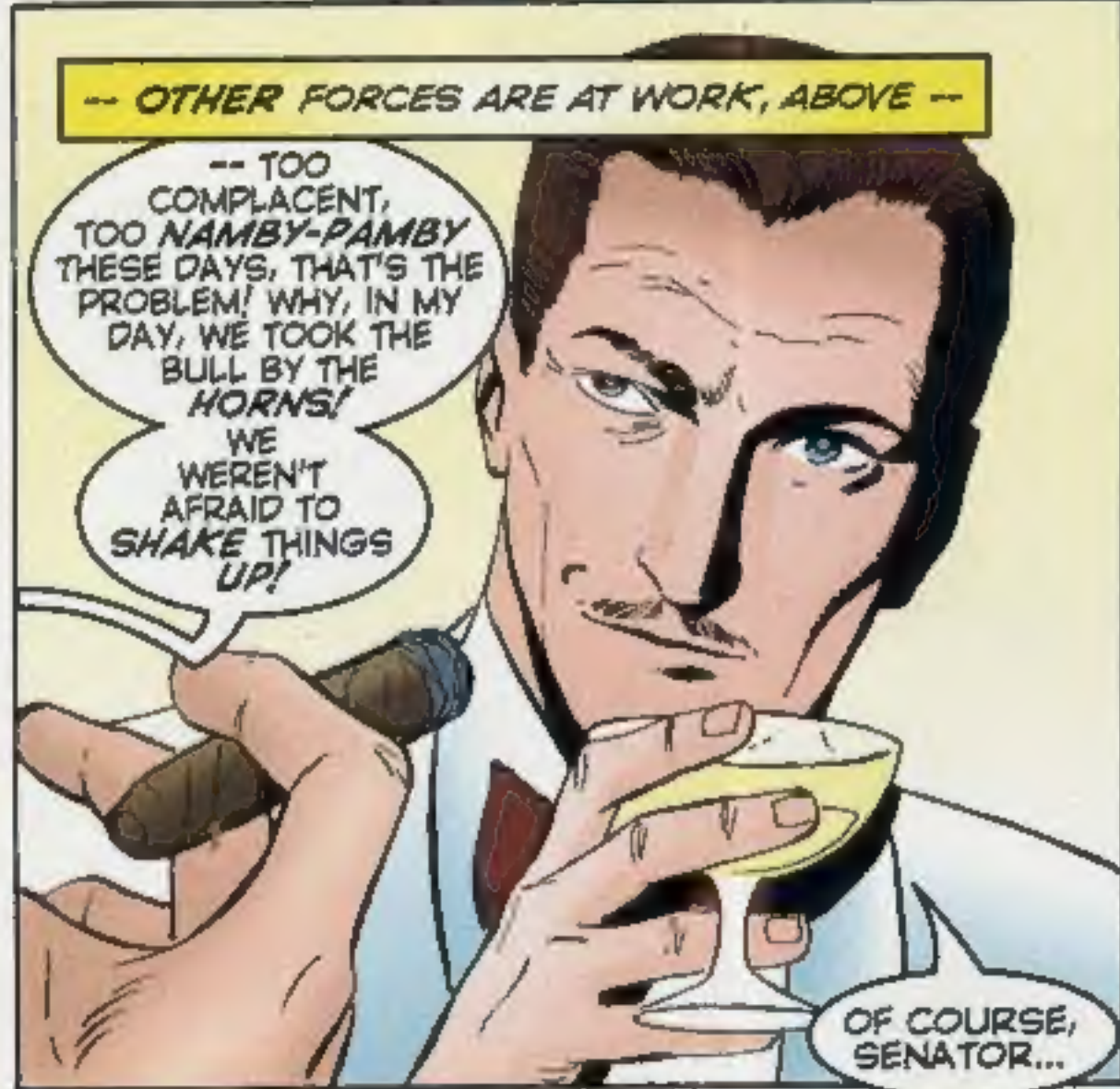
-- AND IF THIS COMPUTERIZED CODE-BREAKER GETS ME THROUGH THE SECURITY LOCK --

-- THEN THIS SECRET ENTRANCE COULD JUST BE THE KEY --



-- THE KEY TO MY DESTROYING THE ARMORED GLADIATOR FOREVER --
-- AND TAKING HIS PLACE -- AS THE ONE, TRUE IRON LANTERN!

BUT EVEN AS KYLE O'BRIEN DESCENDS INTO THE HIDDEN SUB-BASEMENT, HIS MIND ON POWER AND TREACHERY --



-- OTHER FORCES ARE AT WORK, ABOVE --

-- TOO COMPLACENT, TOO NAMBY-PAMBY THESE DAYS, THAT'S THE PROBLEM! WHY, IN MY DAY, WE TOOK THE BULL BY THE HORNS! WE WEREN'T AFRAID TO SHAKE THINGS UP!

OF COURSE, SENATOR...



AT THAT MOMENT...

RRRRMMMBLLL

WHAT --?

WHAT IN THUNDERATION?! THE WHOLE BUILDING'S SHAKING!

Eh?

THERE -- OUT THE WINDOW! OUT ON THE RUNWAY! THAT'S WHAT'S CAUSING IT!

IT'S -- IT'S --

"-- IT'S HORRIBLE!"

ARISE, CREATURE OF DESTRUCTION! ARISE -- MADAME SAPPHIRE COMMANDS YOU!

YOUR SLUMBER IS OVER! ARISE, YOU WHO ARE CALLED GREAT WHITE! ARISE --

HRRAARR!

-- AND VISIT COMPLETE AND UTTER DEVASTATION UPON YOUR ENEMIES!"

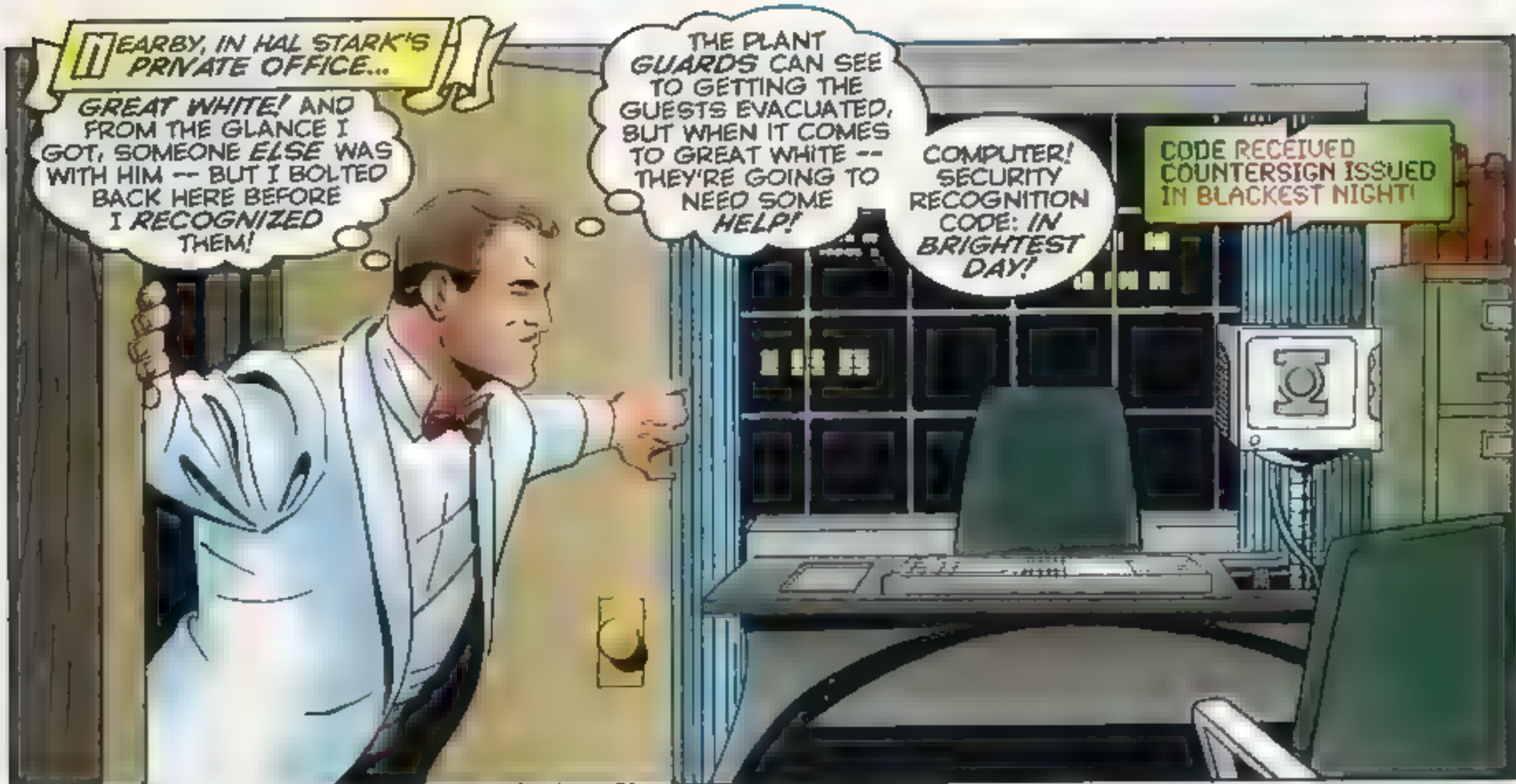
"AND WHOEVER CAN TELL US WHEN OL' WHITEY LAST APPEARED GETS A BIG FAT AHAHA-BRATULATION!"

GOOD GRAVY! I'VE SEEN BRIEFINGS ON THAT CREATURE, OF COURSE, BUT I NEVER DREAMED --!

STARK! WHAT SECURITY MEASURES DO YOU HAVE IN PLACE IN THE EVENT OF SOMETHING LIKE --

STARK?!

BLAST IT -- WHERE IS HE?



NEARBY, IN HAL STARK'S PRIVATE OFFICE...

GREAT WHITE! AND FROM THE GLANCE I GOT, SOMEONE ELSE WAS WITH HIM -- BUT I BOLTED BACK HERE BEFORE I RECOGNIZED THEM!

THE PLANT GUARDS CAN SEE TO GETTING THE GUESTS EVACUATED, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO GREAT WHITE -- THEY'RE GOING TO NEED SOME HELP!

COMPUTER! SECURITY RECOGNITION CODE: IN BRIGHTEST DAY!

CODE RECEIVED
COUNTERSIGN ISSUED
IN BLACKEST NIGHT!



SECOND RECOGNITION PARAMETER: NO EVIL SHALL ESCAPE MY SIGHT!

IDENTITY CONFIRMED
BLACKING OUT ALL WINDOWS AND UNLOCKING ARMOR COMPARTMENT



AW!
IT'S BEEN SOME TIME SINCE I HAD TO WEAR THIS TO KEEP MY HEART BEATING -- BUT I DON'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO GET AWAY FROM IT, DO I?

**BAM
BAM
BAM**

OPEN UP IN THERE, STARK! I SAW YOU GO IN -- YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM ME!



FINE. GARDNER! GYRICH! BREAK IT DOWN! OUR Mr. STARK MAY THINK IT'S ALL RIGHT TO COWER IN HIS OFFICE LIKE A FRIGHTENED CHILD --

-- BUT HE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SAFETY OF ALL THESE PEOPLE, AND IF HE THINKS I'M GOING TO LET HIM GET AWAY WITH THIS --

WHAM



-- HE'S GOT ANOTHER -- THINK -- COMING?

BLAST IT -- WHERE'S HE GOTTEN TO NOW?!

FOR THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION, SENATOR --

-- WE DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO HANGER TEN, AS A GLEAMING FIGURE ROCKET'S ONTO THE SCENE...

GREAT WHITE! STOP THIS DESTRUCTION BEFORE I STOP YOU!

THIS MAKES NO SENSE! GREAT WHITE'S A MECHANICAL BEING -- AND HE WAS DEACTIVATED AFTER HIS LAST DEFEAT!

HE CAN'T JUST WAKE UP -- UNLESS HE WAS WOKEN UP, BY THAT OTHER FIGURE I BRIEFLY GLIMPSED --

-- AND I'M STARTING TO GET A SINKING FEELING AS TO JUST WHO THAT FIGURE WAS...

THOOM

LOOKING FOR ME, LOVER? I'VE GOT A "GET REACQUAINTED" GIFT FOR YOU --

-- BUT I DON'T THINK YOU'RE GOING TO LIKE IT!

THIS IS INSANE! PEPPER'S BECOME MADAME SAPPHIRE AGAIN -- AND I CAN'T EVEN TRY TO SAVE HER --

-- TO LET HER THINK SHE'S DEFEATED ME --

DIDN'T LIKE THAT, DID YOU, ANTERN? TELL ME, DID IT FEEL LIKE A KISS --

-- OR A SLAP?

WHY WHA -- MADAME SAPPHIRE!

ZZAKK

-- BECAUSE AS DANGEROUS AS SHE IS, GREAT WHITE'S THE MORE IMMEDIATE THREAT! MY BEST BET IS TO ENDURE HER ATTACK --

AND WHEN I'M FAR ENOUGH AWAY FROM HER --

-- I CAN TURN MY ATTENTION TO GREAT WHITE, USING MY LANTERN'S BEAM --

"-- WHEN I ASK YOU TO STEP OUTSIDE -- WAAAAAY OUTSIDE!"

-- TO CREATE A BOOSTER ROCKET, BEFORE EITHER OF THEM REALIZES WHAT'S GOING ON!

YOU'RE CAUSING JUST A LITTLE TOO MUCH MESS, G.W! SO I'M AFRAID I'LL HAVE TO SKIP THE FORMALITY OF A COUNTDOWN --

RY?

RAAAHHH!

SHOOM

UNBELIEVABLE! WE'RE ON THE FRINGES OF SPACE -- THERE'S BARELY ANY AIR AT ALL TO LET THE SOUND TRAVEL, AND I CAN STILL HEAR HIM!

HE MUST BE FURIOUS -- OR AS FURIOUS AS A GIANT KILLER ROBOT CAN GET, AT LEAST!



THAP!

Uh-oh! I UNDERESTIMATED HIS STRENGTH WHEN WHIPPING UP THAT HARNESS! HE'S BROKEN FREE --

CONCENTRATING, IRON LANTERN FEELS THE EMERALD ENERGY THAT POWERS HIM FLOW OUTWARD FROM HIS ARMORED FORM --

-- CREATING A SECOND LAYER OF ARMOR AROUND HIM -- ONE THAT GROWS LARGER --

-- AND LARGER --

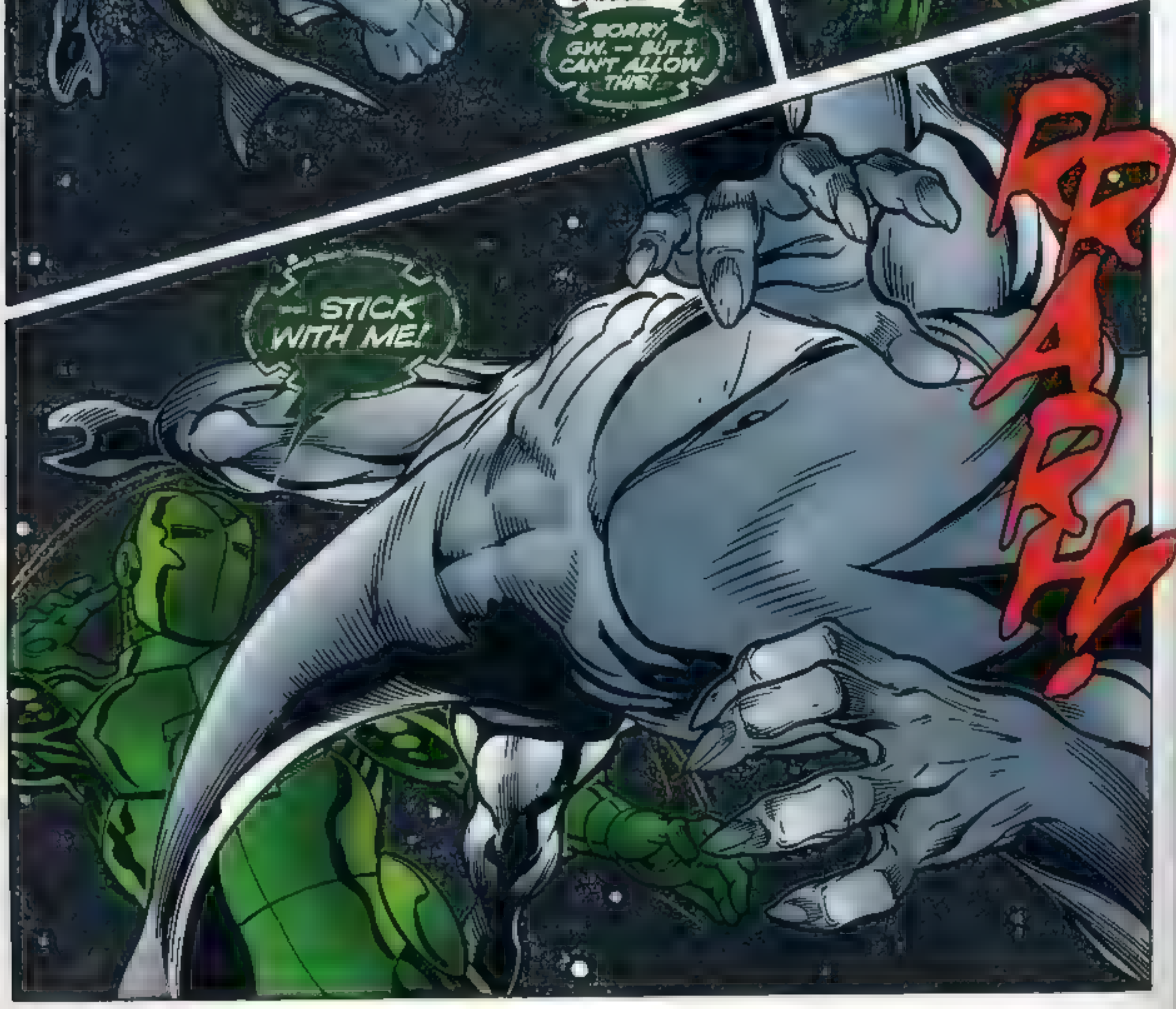
YOU WANT A NICE, BIG TARGET TO DIRECT YOUR ANGER TOWARD --

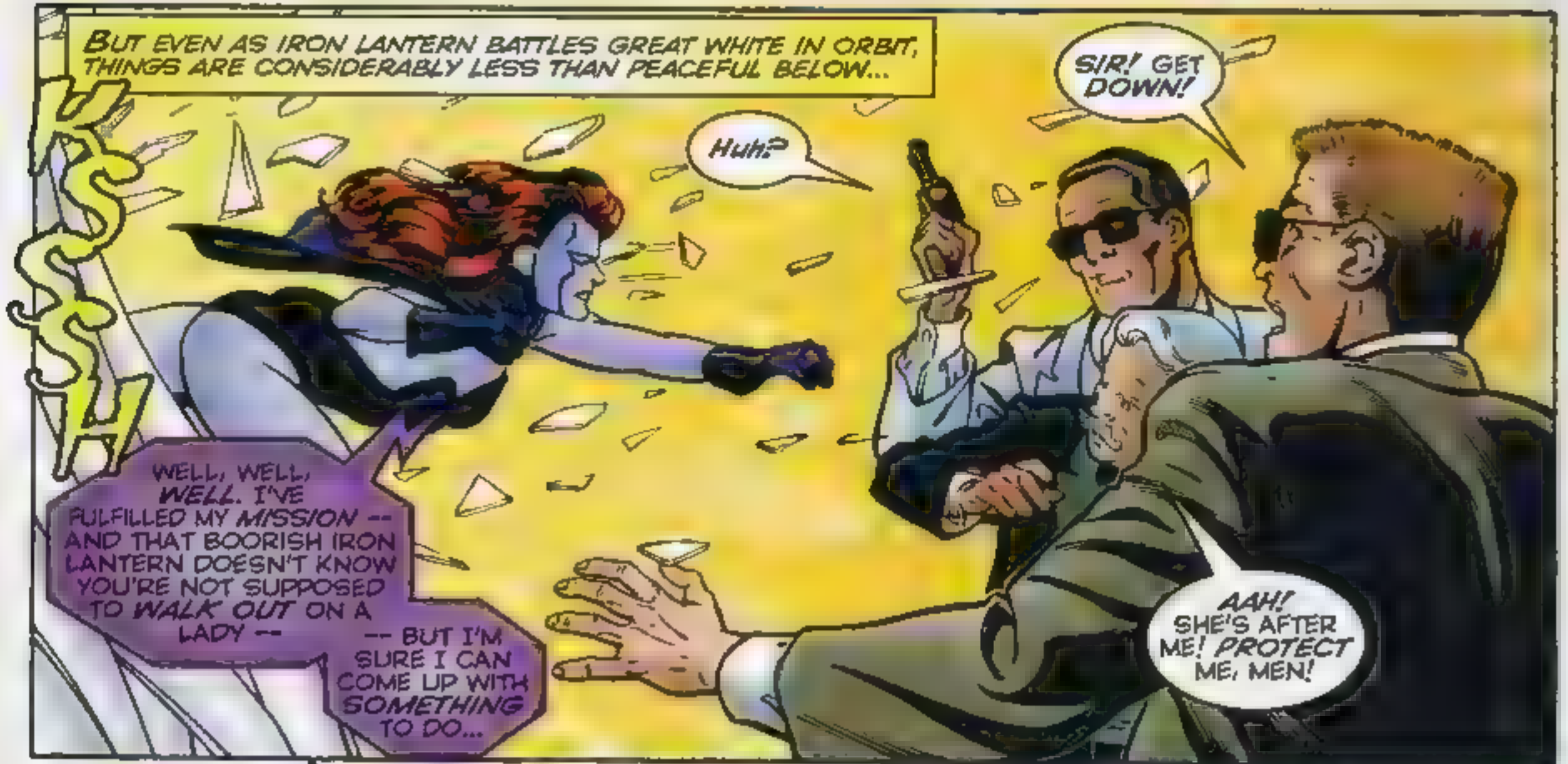
-- AND HE'S AS CAPABLE OF MANEUVERING IN NEAR-VACUUM AS I AM! HE'LL HEAD RIGHT BACK FOR EARTH, UNLESS --

SORRY, GW. -- BUT I CAN'T ALLOW THIS!

STICK WITH ME!

RRR!





BUT EVEN AS IRON LANTERN BATTLES GREAT WHITE IN ORBIT, THINGS ARE CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN PEACEFUL BELOW...

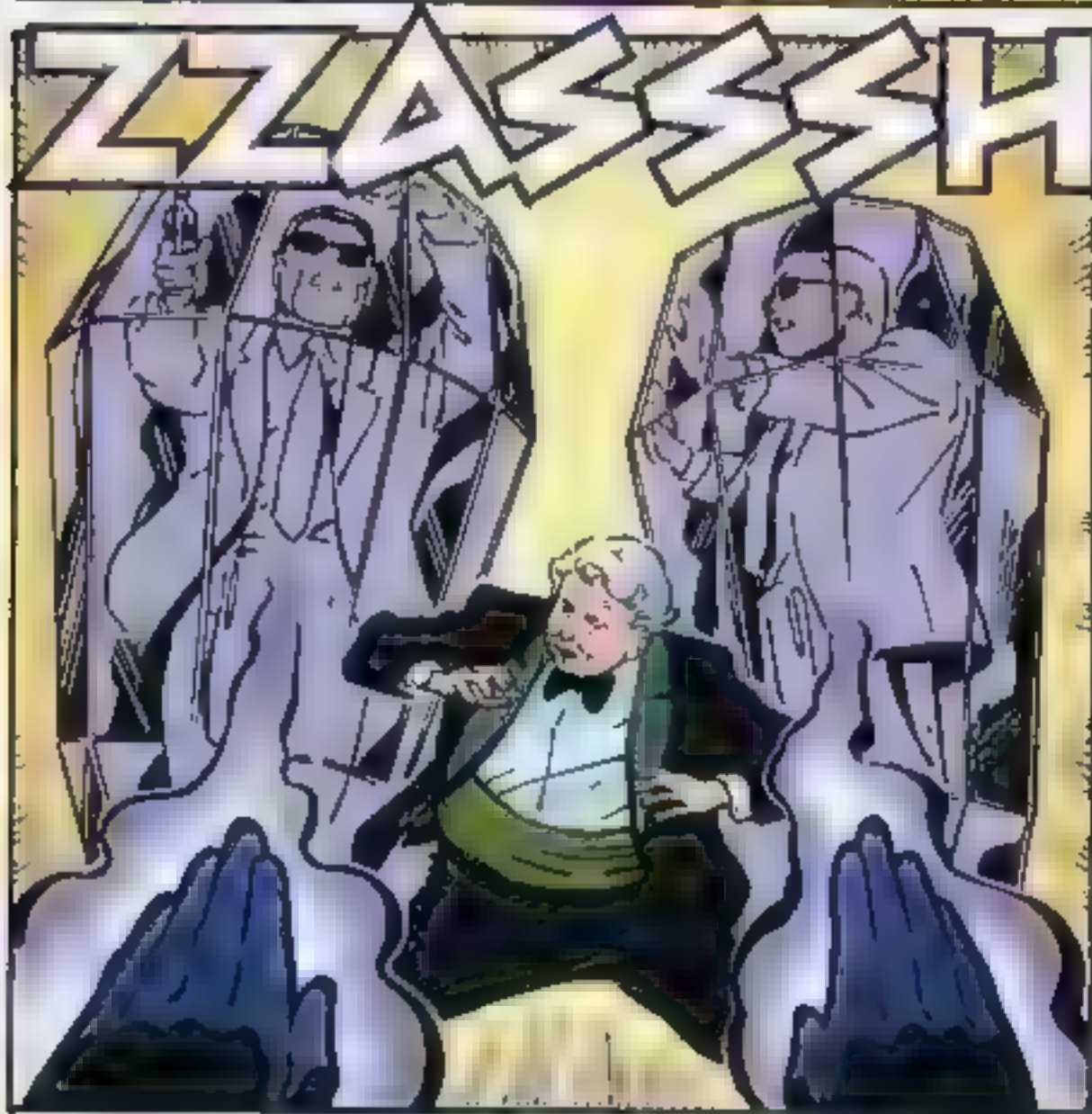
SIR! GET DOWN!

Huh?

WELL, WELL, WELL. I'VE FULFILLED MY MISSION -- AND THAT BOORISH IRON LANTERN DOESN'T KNOW YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO WALK OUT ON A LADY --

-- BUT I'M SURE I CAN COME UP WITH SOMETHING TO DO...

AAH! SHE'S AFTER ME! PROTECT ME, MEN!

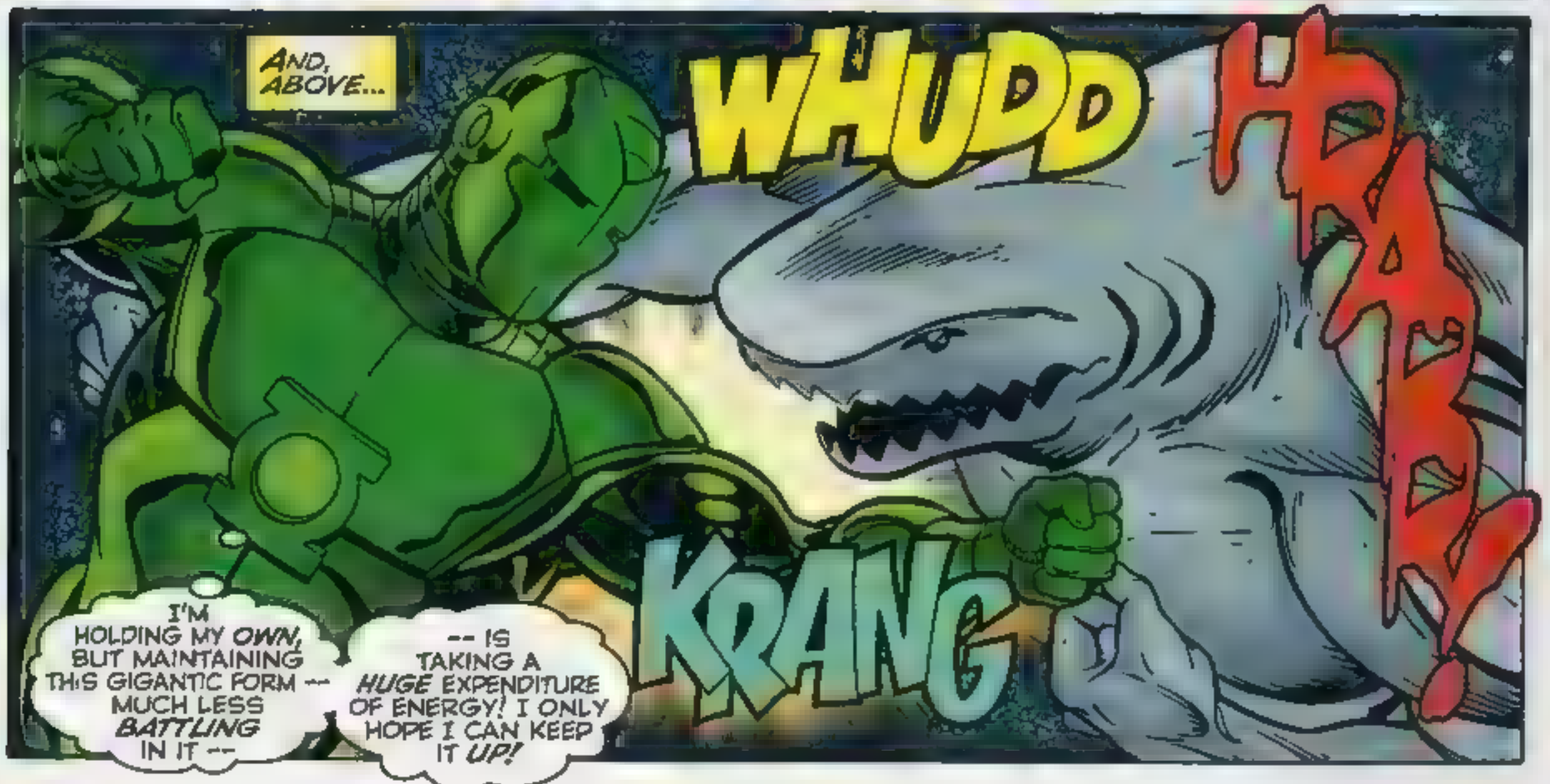


ZZASSSH



SUCH WELL-MEANING FELLOWS -- BUT IN THE END, ONLY MEN. AND NOW, SENATOR HARRINGTON FERRIS...

LET'S GO SOMEPLACE WHERE WE CAN BE ALONE, hmm?



AND, ABOVE...

WHUDD

HAAR!

KRANG

I'M HOLDING MY OWN, BUT MAINTAINING THIS GIGANTIC FORM -- MUCH LESS BATTLING IN IT --

-- IS TAKING A HUGE EXPENDITURE OF ENERGY! I ONLY HOPE I CAN KEEP IT UP!



AND BELOW...

WHAT IS IT, HAPPY? WHY'D YOU INSIST WE COME OUT HERE?

SOMETHING'S WRONG -- DON'T YOU HEAR IT? IT'S IN TROUBLE!

I DON'T HEAR ANYTHING...

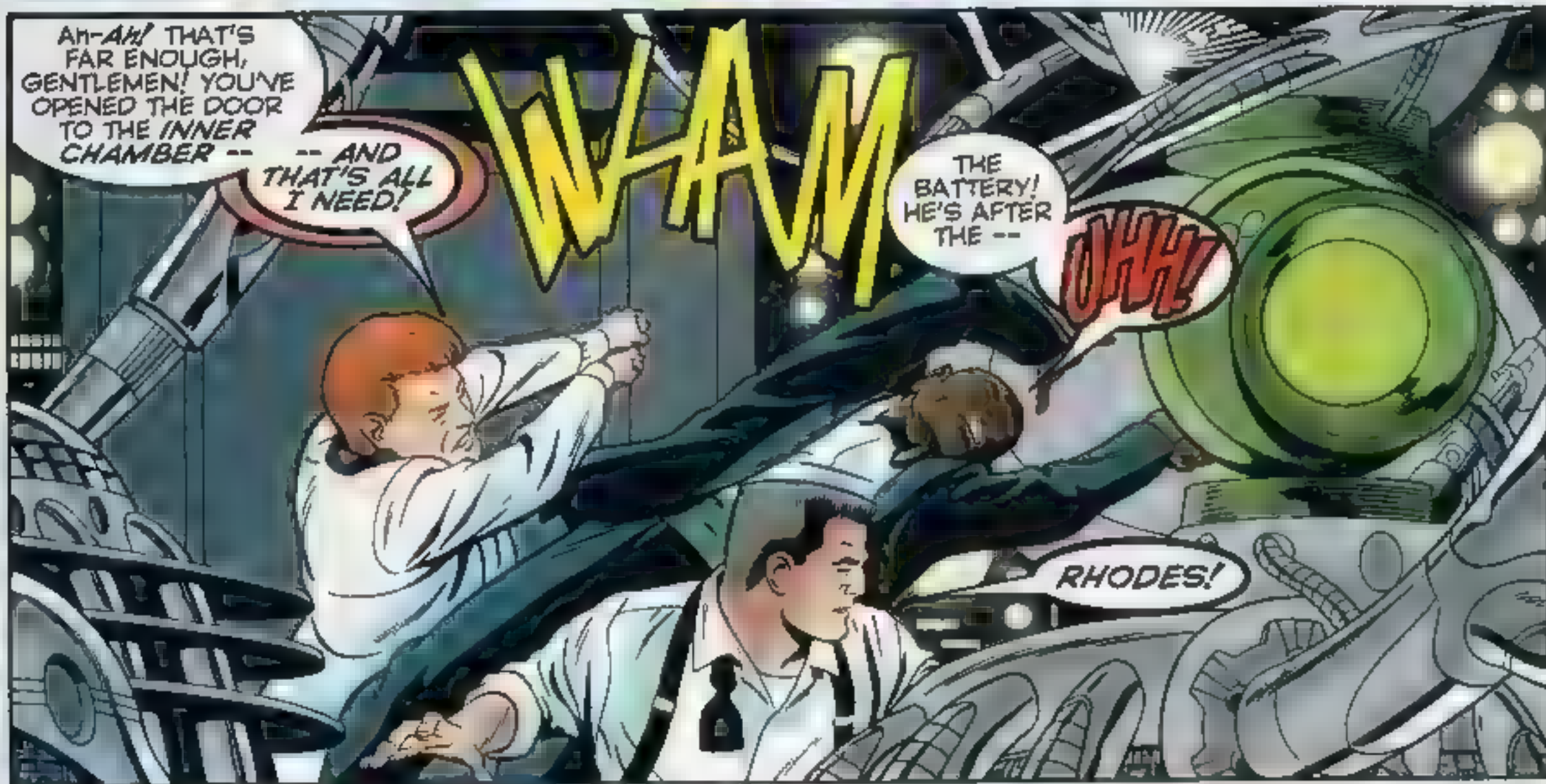


JUST AS I SUSPECTED -- HE'S GOT CONFEDERATES! NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS WAIT -- WHILE THEY LEAD ME RIGHT TO WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR!

WELL, YOU ~~WALK WITH BLUEPRINTS~~ AN' DRAFTING TABLES, PAL. ME, I GET MY HANDS DIRTY -- AN' I KNOW WHAT AN OVERTAXED GENERATOR SOUNDS LIKE!

THAT BATTERY'S POWERFUL, BUT EVEN IT --

PALMPRINT RECOGNIZED.



AN-AN! THAT'S FAR ENOUGH, GENTLEMEN! YOU'VE OPENED THE DOOR TO THE INNER CHAMBER --

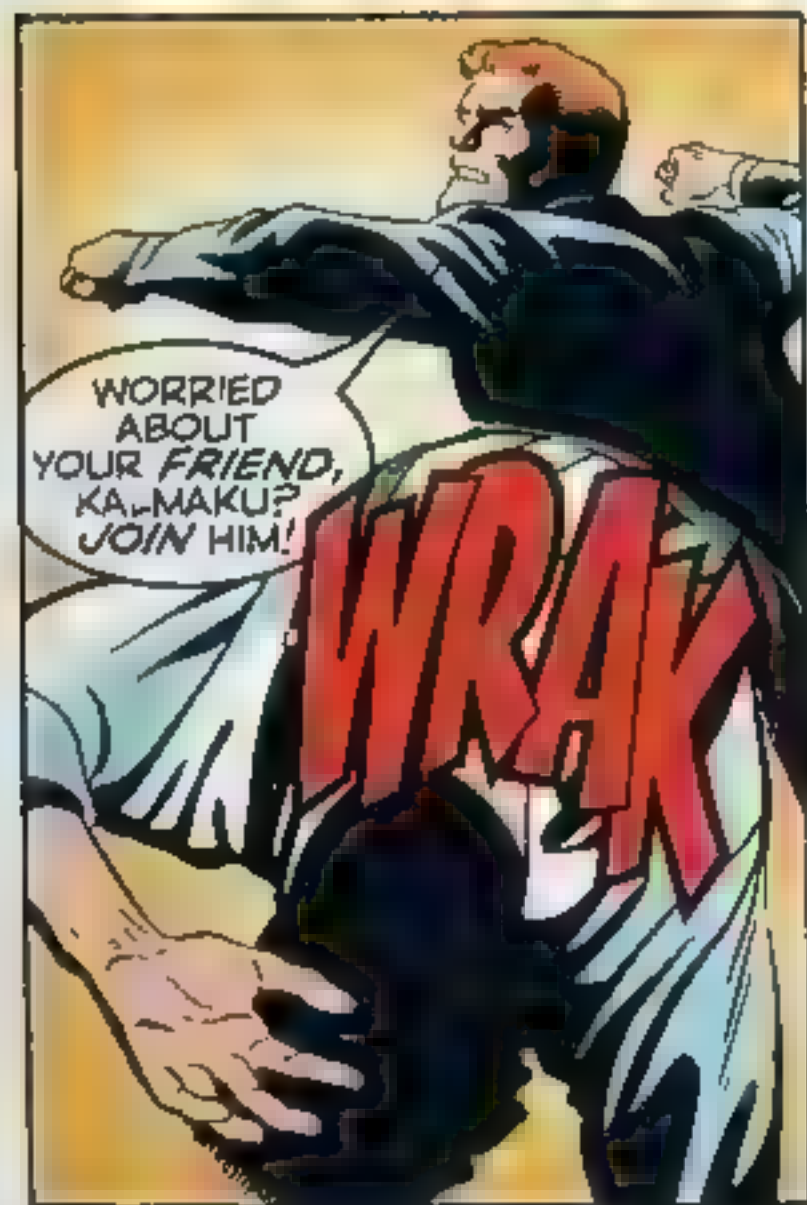
-- AND THAT'S ALL I NEED!

WHAAM

THE BATTERY! HE'S AFTER THE --

OH!

RHODES!



WORRIED ABOUT YOUR FRIEND, KA-MAKU? JOIN HIM!

WRACK



HEY, I REMEMBER YOU NOW -- YOU'RE THE SUBSTITUTE, RIGHT? THAT WAS A PRETTY GOOD PUNCH, K.D. YOU HIT HARD.

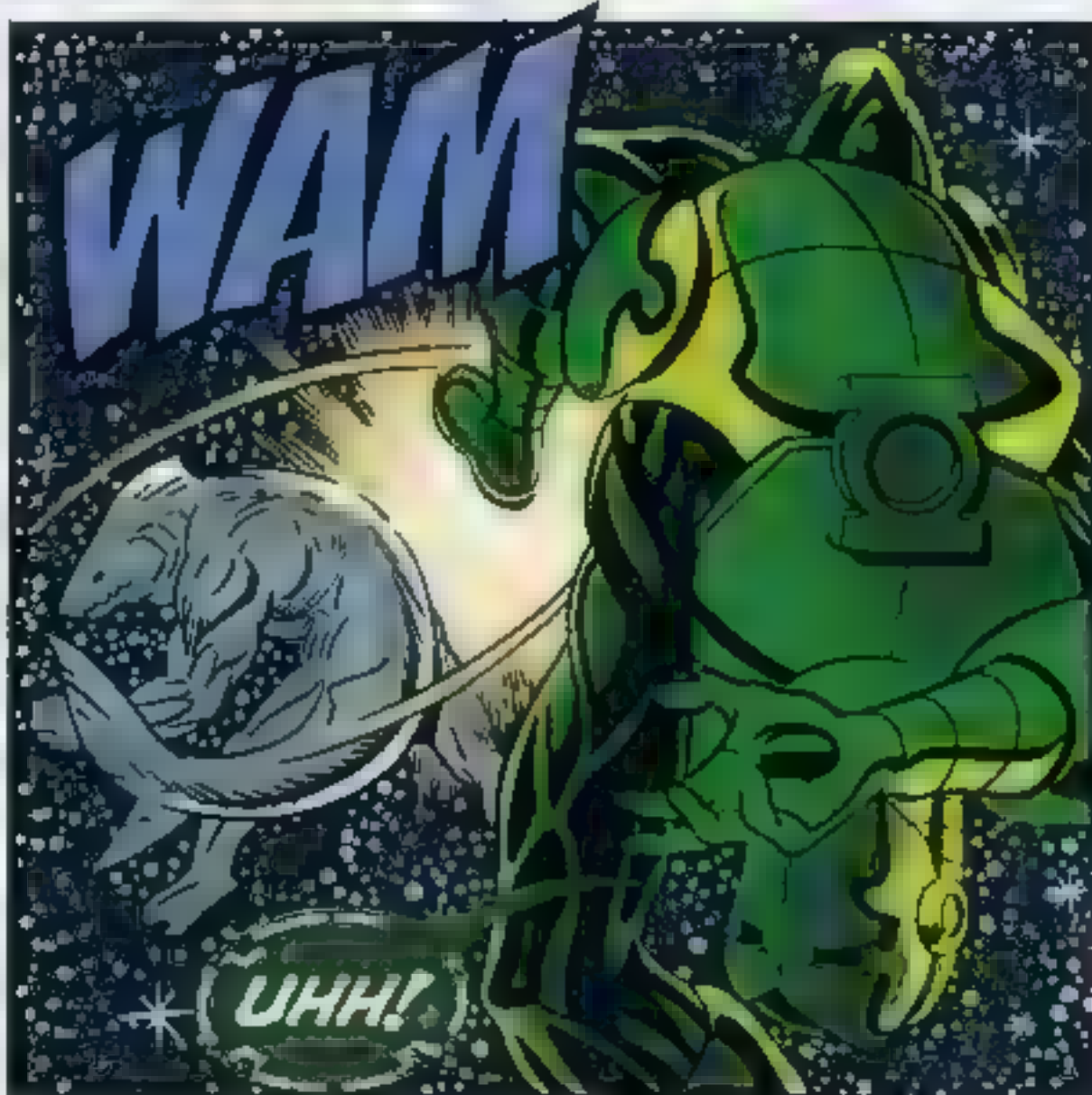
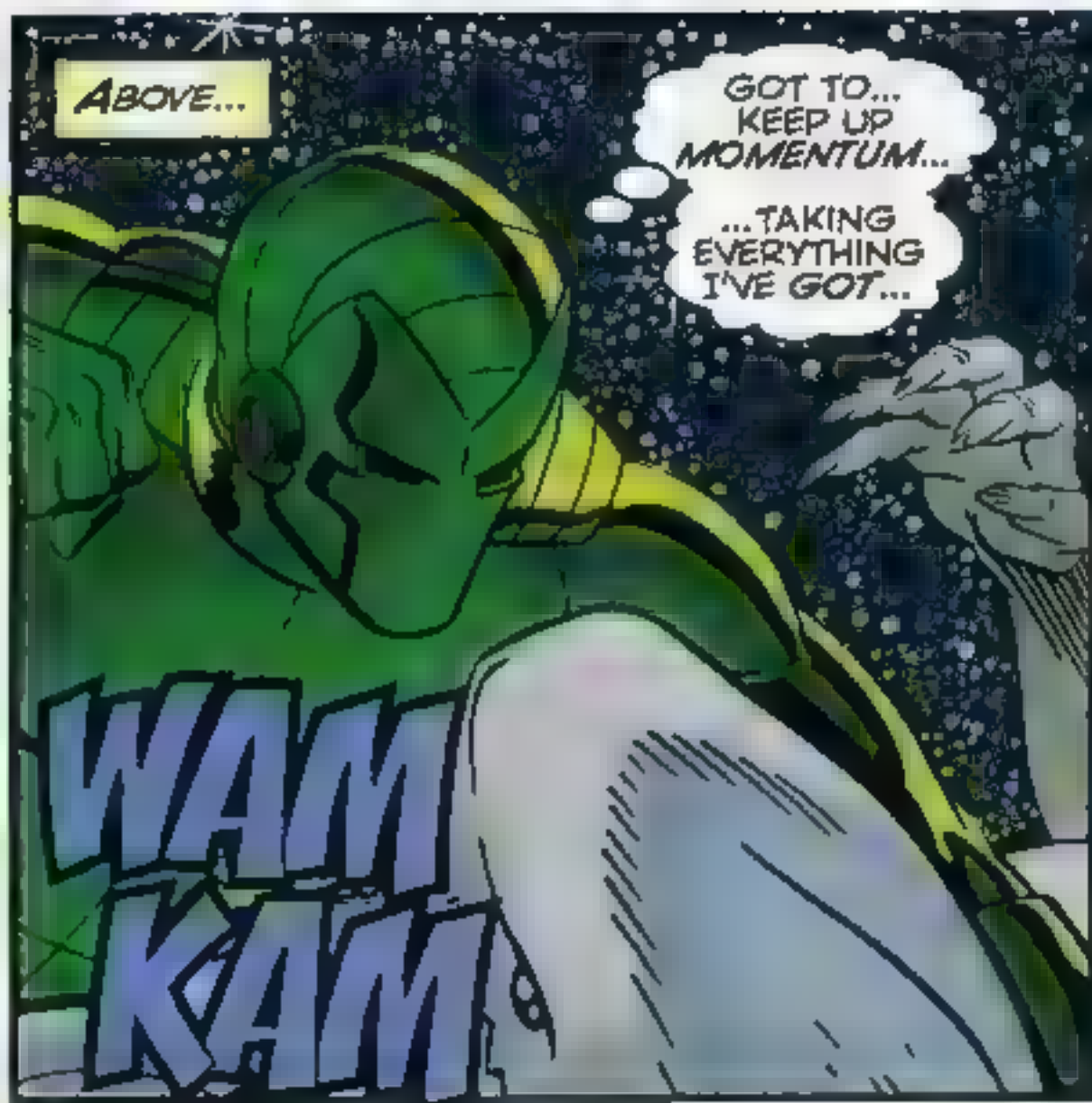
BUT ME, I WAS ALL-BATTALION BOXING CHAMP, WHEN I WAS IN THE SERVICE --

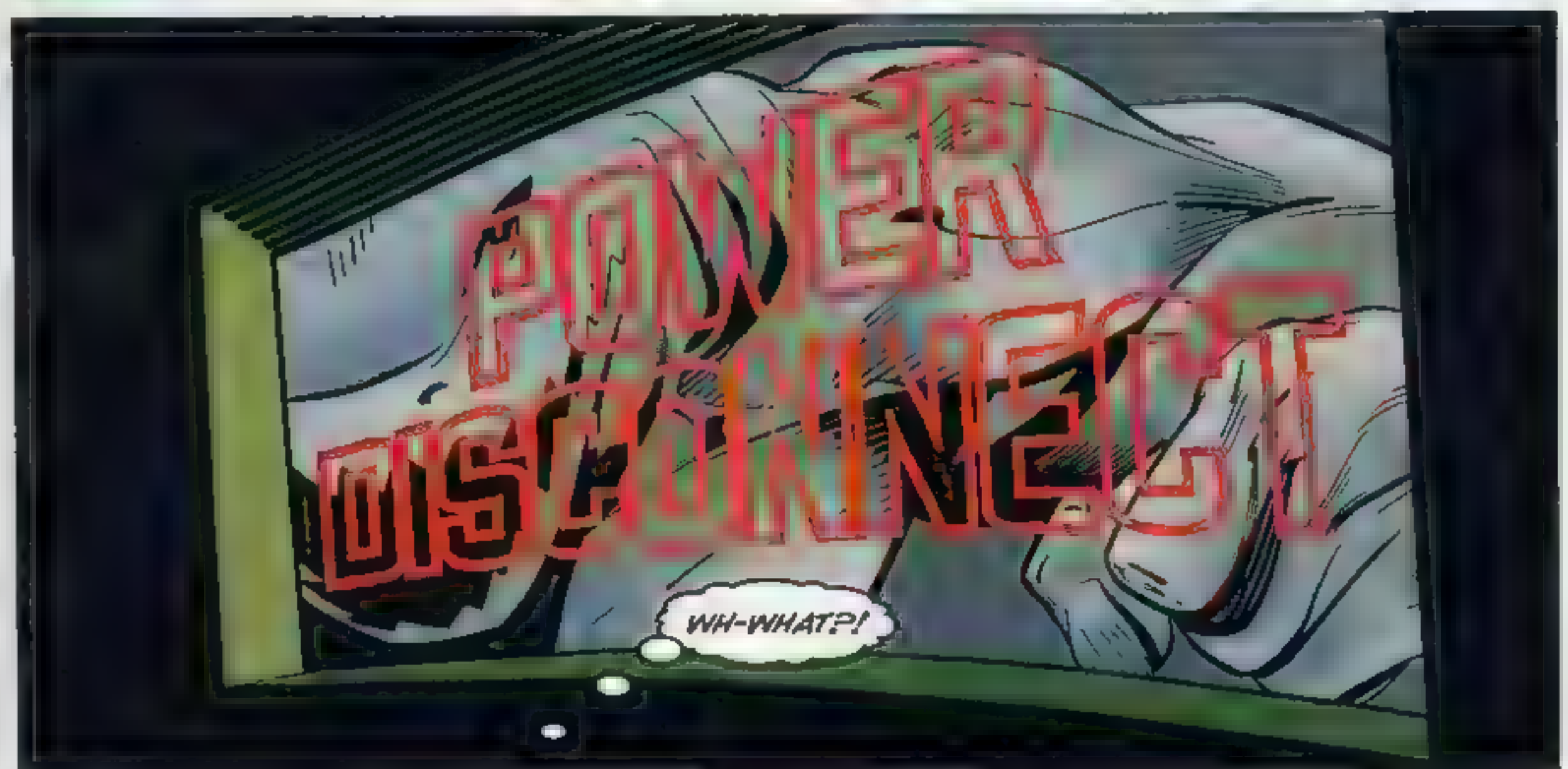


-- I HIT HARDER!

WHUD

Huh!







SOMEONE'S
DISCONNECTED
THE POWER
BATTERY!

THE SUIT --
IT'S SWITCHING
TO EMERGENCY
RESERVE POWER --
CAN'T MAINTAIN
GIANT FORM ANY
LONGER!

BUT I
WON'T RUN --
I CAN'T!

IF
GREAT WHITE'S
ALLOWED TO RUN
UNCHECKED ON
EARTH, HE'LL KILL
MILLIONS!

ONE
CHANCE --
IT'S RISKY, BUT
I'VE GOT TO
TAKE IT!

CHOMP

HRH!

HR?



I -- I
DID IT!

DESTROYED
HIM -- FROM
WITHIN -- WHERE
HE'S MOST
VULNERABLE --
BUT --
USED ALL MY
RESERVE
POWER --



-- NOTHING
-- NOTHING
LEFT --

AND AS IRON LANTERN
FEELS THE TUG OF
GRAVITY -- PULLING
HIM DOWNWARD,
DRAGGING HIM
TOWARD THE EARTH
BELOW --



-- ON THAT EARTH, A FEW THREADS ARE STILL DANGLING --

-- WHETHER IT'S OUTSIDE THE HIDDEN BATTERY CHAMBER --

HAPPY!
C'MON,
HAPPY -- TALK
TO ME! YOU
OKAY?

YEAH --
I'LL BE FINE.
BUT HAL --
HAL'S IN
TROUBLE...



-- JUST BEYOND THE MAIN GATE --

LOOK AT
THAT -- A
SHOOTING
STAR!

TOO BAD!
I'VE ALREADY
GOT MY WISH --
AND NOBODY'S
TAKING IT
AWAY FROM
ME!



-- OR IN THE DESERT TO THE EAST OF COAST CITY --

WH-
WHERE
ARE YOU
TAKING
ME?

SILENCE,
SENATOR!
UNLESS, INSTEAD
OF GETTING A WELL-
DESERVED LESSON
IN ETIQUETTE --

-- YOU'D
RATHER MAKE
AN IMPACT CRATER
BIGGER THAN THAT
METEORITE'S
ABOUT TO!

BUT THOSE THREADS
HAVE TWO THINGS
IN COMMON --

-- FIRST, IN THE HEART OF THAT "SHOOTING STAR" --

I GUESS-- THIS IS IT! I CAN FEEL MY ARMOR -- STARTING TO MELT!
HAPPY, PEPPER, STEW -- I'M SORRY -- FOR ALL THE TIMES I MESSED UP --
-- WISH -- I COULD HAVE DONE MORE --

-- AND FINALLY, ON THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON, WHERE WE FIND A FACE WE HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE --

-- BUT ONE THAT'S HAD A GREAT DEAL TO DO WITH RECENT EVENTS --

IT'S ALMOST TOO EASY.

AND NOW HE'S FALLEN, JUST LIKE THE REST OF THEM. ONE MORE PAWN OF OA, CRUSHED AND BROKEN --
-- IN THE HANDS OF **MANDARINESTRO!**

SABOTAGING THEIR EFFORTS IN ORDER TO KEEP THEM *DISTRACTED*... BRINGING THEM ALL TOGETHER...

...TURNING THAT LOU O'BRIEN INTO MY AGENT... AWAKENING MADAME SAPPHIRE...

...AND THE FOOL NEVER SUSPECTED.

NEXT: THE MASTERMIND REVEALED; BUT HAS IT COME TOO LATE? BE HERE FOR THE FINAL SHOWDOWN!

THE STORY WE HAD TO CALL: OH, BRING BACK MY LANTERN TO ME!

Dear Editor:

Finally! You cannot imagine how thrilled I was to learn that at long last my favorite Amalgam hero was getting his own title.

I've been Iron Lantern's biggest fan since the ol' Emerald Shellhead first appeared in Showcase of Suspense. I've followed him through all 32 issues and even into the hard-to-find Iron Lantern/Aquamariner one-shot. So I'm pumped for seeing him finally receive his own title and take part in some true three-part, novel-length adventures.

I admit, I was a little skeptical when Kurt, Paul, and Al took over SOS. They had a hard act to follow in IL's creators, Archie Broome and Gil Heck. I wasn't sure they could match the solid storytelling and sweeping, cosmic scenes we'd come to expect. But I was sold after that titanic battle two issues ago with Dr. Whiplash and his magnetic whip, which led to the revelation of the Doc's ties to The 100!

Now that H.E.C.T.O.R. again has entered the fray, it's obvious the new team has a firm grip on the reins. They've already shown they understand what's at H.E.C.T.O.R.'s core: He's a Highly Evolved Creature focused Totally On Revenge. And he's got the guns to prove it! What I really liked was the way H.E.C.T.O.R. manipulated IL's other foes, particularly Black Brand and the Sonicorn, into doing his dirty work. I can hardly wait until H.E.C.T.O.R. joins the battle directly next issue. Obviously, Hal is going to have his hands full!

Until next time...

Jack Pietrantonio
714 Timber Avenue
Philaredo, TX 19035

As you saw in our last issue of SOS, Jack, H.E.C.T.O.R. gave the Emerald Shellhead quite a tussle. We hope you approved of the way Hal managed to pull himself out of that one! Kurt, Paul, and Al have been fans of our hero since the beginning, and they couldn't wait to get rolling on his adventures when they were offered the chance. But if you thought The 100 would take this licking and go away quietly, you haven't been paying attention!

Dear Lantern Lovers:

I just heard the news that Iron Lantern will soon have his own book, and I wanted to write down my thoughts for your perusal.

It's my fervent hope that your new creative staff, with several issues now under their belts, will take this opportunity to explore some of the mysteries that have been given such short shrift due to sharing SOS with Aquamariner.

Specifically, I would love to learn more about the Lantern's Golden Age counterpart, the Human Lantern. Do their powers in some way derive from the same source? What was the significance of his mention of a Universe-Two? The Human Lantern offers a wealth of story possibilities, and to pass them up now would be criminal!

I also hope to see more focus on the relationship among Pepper, Happy, and Hal. I

SOCK IT TO O.A.

somehow get the feeling that you guys are planning for Happy to win the girl, and I would be glad to see that happen! The thought of Senator Ferris learning that Happy was to be his son-in-law is a scene I wouldn't want to miss!

I also want to encourage you guys to play up the role of Stewart Rhodes, the brainy black pilot who seems to be angling to step into Hal's shoes some day. Between him and Happy, the dour Eskimo mechanic, this book epitomizes the value of brotherhood among all people. I applaud your sensitivity to this issue.

On a lighter note, I also would have no complaints if you played up Hal's brothers, Jim and Jack. The notion that Jim's wife Bethany thinks Jim is IL adds just the proper touch of humor to offset the cosmic menaces and strong social messages that pop up regularly.

In fact, if you ever need an idea for a back-up series, it would be dynamite to get a look inside that diary that Happy has been keeping about the adventures he's shared with Iron Lantern! I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Happy has figured out Hal's secret identity. Wouldn't that be a kick?

Joanna Blanchard
159 Fruitbox Dr.
Kent City, CA 91240

Thanks for the encouragement, Joanna! As you can see this month, Pepper may have too much on her mind these days to worry about which guy has his eye on her. As if the senator wasn't giving her enough trouble, she now has to deal with Madame Sapphire! As for the Human Lantern, take a peek at Super Soldier, Man of War #1 this week for another brief glimpse of WWII's beacon of justice! We're also glad you like the treatment of Stewart and Happy; they're two of our favorites as well. You'll be seeing more of them in upcoming issues, especially when...ah, but that would be telling, wouldn't it?

Dear Kurt, Paul and Al:

I'm really jazzed by the word that Iron Lantern is getting his own book! With the new room to breathe, you've got to let him meet a few other Amalgam heroes. And who could be better than Magneto and the Magnetic Men? It's a natural! Just think about it.

Lucio Douglas
130124 Gardenbox Ave.
South San York, CA

Consider it thought, Lou! We mentioned your idea to Kurt, and he went away mumbling something about needing at least that much help if the Emerald Shellhead were

going to again tackle the Weaponers of AIM! But before anything like that happens, check out the Men's cool new designs and their human identities over in Magnetic Men Featuring Magneto #1, on sale this week! It's Another Astounding Amalgam Achievement

Hey guys—

I loved SOS #29, "The Coming Of...5700 AD!" Taking Hal into the future, giving him the identity of Arno Manning, and letting him help the future Earth as Iron Lantern 5700 adds an entirely new spectrum of stories to dig into. And as a big fan of the Happy-Pepper-Hal triangle, I can't wait to see what lies in store for his girlfriend-of-the-future, Sunset Vane. I get the feeling that she really wants to love him to death!

Elayne Burke
(Address withheld by request)

We promise, Elayne, Arno Manning will return! As for Sunset Vane, even we don't know what she's got up her slinky sleeve. But we're sure it'll be a killer!

Dear Emerald Editors:

Okay, I'm gonna give it to you straight. I want to know more! Tell us where Rhomann Sur got the power battery! Show us who those "protectors" were he was calling when his ship crashed and what was in that bottle he drank before he died! Reveal the reason why Iron Lantern had that dream that he'd been turned into a puppet called Mark Five! Show us more of Kyle O'Brien's days as the Green Guardsman! Disclose the terrible secret hidden by Hal's arch competitor, Olivia Stane! And give us details about the Human Lantern! I'm dying out here waiting for the answers to all these juicy mysteries!

Allan Vazquez
Hartwick, CT

But what a way to go, eh, Allan? Seriously, just keep reading, as we'll be getting to all those secrets in due time. Except maybe for the dream about the puppet—some things were just not meant to be known! But with two votes this month for more adventures of the Golden Age Human Lantern, rest assured we'll be taking a look at where he fits into this book pronto!

NEXT ISSUE: You'll hate yourself if you miss this one! Kyle O'Brien's treachery has left Iron Lantern powerless, just as he faces his most dastardly foe, Mandarinestro! Can the Emerald Shellhead save himself—and can he find a way to release Pepper from the terrible curse of Madame Sapphire? Plus, Hal's secretary, Janice Doremus, returns from vacation with something on her mind! Good afternoon, effendi!



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